

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-11 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 A-01 OPR-02

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8106

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK

COMMSIXTHFLT

CTF SIX ZERO

CTF SIX ONE

CTF SIX TWO

CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA

DIA WASHDC

CIA WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: BATTLES CONTINUE; POLITICAL MOVEMENT SLOW

REF: BEIRUT 0352 (1550Z)

1. SUMMARY: EASTERN BEIRUT SUBURBS ARE STILL SCENE OF MAJOR BATTLES BETWEEN PALESTINIANS AND CHRISTIAN RIGHTISTS. STRUGGLE AROUND TEL ZAATAR CAMP REPORTEDLY HAS SETTLED INTO STATIONARY POSITIONS. ONE FOCUS OF CONFLICT IS TWO NORTHERN BRIDGES ON BEIRUT RIVER, OVER WHICH PALESTINIANS AND THEIR ALLIES CURRENTLY HAVE EFFECTIVE CONTROL. PHALANGE GAINING UPPER HAND IN SIEGE OF DBAYE CAMP NORTH OF BEIRUT (A SMALL AND TOTALLY CHRISTIAN CAMP). FIGHTING IS REPORTED FROM BOTH ZAHLE AND TRIPOLI AREAS. PROJECTED FRANGIE-ASAD MEETING CONTINUES TO HOLD CENTER STAGE POLITICALLY. END SUMMARY.

2. THE BLOODLETTING HAS CONTINUED, INVOLVING SEVERAL PARTS OF LEBANON. THE SIEGE OF TEL ZAATAR HAS PROVED TO BE MAGNET FOR MOST OF FIGHTING GROUPS OF EASTERN BEIRUT AND SUBURBS. THE FIRING HAS SPILLED OVER INTO TARIK JADIDE AND MAZRAA ON VERY NOTICEABLE LEVEL, AS WELL AS SABRA CAMP WHICH REPORTEDLY IS GETTING ITS LICKS IN WITH ROCKETS AND ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS DIRECTED TOWARD FURN EL CHEBBAK AND AIN EL-RUMANNEH. BUT DESPITE THE TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF FIREPOWER INVOLVED, THE BLOCKADE HAS SETTLED INTO STATIONARY PATTERN. THE PHALANGISTS HAVE SUPPOSEDLY DECIDED TO WREST CONTROL OF ACCESS TO MKALLES ON SOUTHEAST BORDER OF THE TEL ZAATAR CAMP AWAY FROM PALESTINIANS, PROMPTED BY FEARS THAT PALESTINIANS HAVE BEGUN TO DESTROY INDUSTRIAL PLANTS LOCATED THERE. WHATEVER CAUSE, HUGE BLAZES WERE APPARENT IN MKALLES LAST NIGHT.

3. THE STRUGGLE FOR TWO NORTHERN BRIDGES OVER BEIRUT RIVER IS ONE FOCUS OF BATTLE, WITH PHALANGE OFFENSIVE SAID TO HAVE PENETRATED INTO QUARANTINA. HOWEVER, PALESTINIANS AND THEIR ALLIES APPEAR TO HAVE EFFECTIVE CONTROL OF BOTH BRIDGES FROM CONFIDENTIAL

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POSITIONS IN QUARANTINA AND MASLAKH. LOCAL ARMENIANS ATTEMPTED TO NEGOTIATE NEUTRALITY FOR SOUTHERN OF TWO BRIDGES, WHICH LEADS INTO CENTER OF ARMENIAN QUARTER, BUT THIS MOVE WAS UNSUCCESSFUL. ADDING TO GENERAL MISERY, MOST OF KURDISH INHABITANTS OF CAMP NEXT TO HELOU BRIDGE (MOST NORTHERNLY) HAVE BEEN FORCED TO FLEE AND PART OF THEIR SHANTY TOWN HAS BEEN SET ON FIRE, THE SMOKE MINGLING WITH FIRES FROM ADJACENT PORT WAREHOUSE.

4. THE TUG OF WAR CONTINUES UP AND DOWN BAB IDRIS FROM MARTYR'S SQUARE TO THE ST. GEORGES HOTEL. THE MOURABITOUN EXPelled THE ISF FROM MURR TOWER YESTERDAY AND ARE ROCKETING THE HOLIDAY INN. BUT THERE HAVE BEEN FEWER PROBLEMS WITH SNIPERS FIRING IN DIRECTION OF THE EMBASSY TODAY.

5. SITUATION CONCERNING THE DBAYE CAMP NORTH OF BEIRUT IS CONFUSED. PHALANGISTS CLAIM THROUGH THEIR PAPER "AL AMAL" THAT FIGHTING STOPPED AT 0215 HOURS TODAY, AFTER SIX-POINT AGREEMENT WAS CONCLUDED. THESE INCLUDE WITHDRAWAL OF PALESTINIANS INTO CAMP AND TURNOVER OF "FOREIGN ELEMENTS" TO PHALANGISTS WITH RED CROSS SUPERVISION. IF REPORT IS THRU, THIS IS TANTAMOUNT TO LOW-COST PHALANGIST VICTORY AGAINST ALMOST TOTALLY CHRISTIAN CAMP. OTHER NEWS-PAPERS STATE, HOWEVER, THAT THE PALESTINIANS HAVE NOT YET GIVEN IN.

6. IN MOUNTAINS AROUND BEIRUT, ALEY AND KAHALLE HAVE BEEN ENGAGED IN NON-STOP BATTLE. SAME IS TRUE OF VILLAGES OF JIYE AND BARJA NEAR DAMOUR. MOST OF THE ROADS THROUGHOUT THAT AREA HAVE BEEN CUT.

7. IDENTICAL SITUATION EXISTS IN ZAHLE, WHICH APPEARS TO BE UNDER BOMBARDMENT ONCE MORE BY SHIITES AND PALESTINIANS OF THE BEKAA. THE ARMY COMMANDER OF ZAHLE REGION REPORTEDLY FEARS A MAJOR ASSAULT UPON THE TOWN WITHIN 48 HOURS.

8. IN NORTH LEBANON, THE ARMY HAS ISSUED ANOTHER IN A GROWING LIST OF ULTIMATUMS TO VARIOUS FACTIONS IN TRIPOLI, ZGHORTA AND THE AKKAR TO RETURN SOME 28 MILITARY VEHICLES
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STOLEN IN RECENT DAYS BY 0800 TODAY. THE RESULTS ARE UNKNOWN AS YET. IN MEANTIME, TRIPOLI-ZGHORTA CONTINUE TO SETTLE THEIR DIFFERENCES BY ROCKETS, AND EXODUS OF CHRISTIANS FROM THE AKKAR GOES ON.

9. SLIGHT MOVEMENT IS EVIDENT IN POLITICAL ARENA, MOST OF IT CENTERED ON PROJECTED FRANGIE-ASAD MEETING. TODAY FRANGIE CONFERS WITH MARONITE LEADERS INCLUDING CAMILLE CHAMOOUN, PIERRE GEMAYEL, MONASTERY LEADER FATHER KASSIS, MARONITE LEAGUE CHIEF CHAKER ABOUSLEIMAN, AND DEFENDERS OF CEDARS HEAD FUAD CHEMALI. TOMORROW BEING REGULAR DAY WEEKLY CABINET SESSION, PRESIDENT'S SCHEDULE IS OPEN IN HOPES THAT CABINET WILL ACTUALLY MEET; BUT THURSDAY FRANGIE IS DUE TO CONSULT LEADERS OF ORTHODOX COMMUNIY AND FRIDAY WITH CATHOLIC LEADERS. PURPOSE OF

THESE MEETINGS IS TO GET COORDINATED CHRISTIAN SUPPORT, IF POSSIBLE, FOR NEGOTIATIONS FRANGIE WILL UNDERTAKE WITH SYRIANS. MOST LIKELY DATE FOR CONFERENCE OF TWO PRESIDENTS NOW BELIEVED TO BE THIS SATURDAY, JAN 17. CONTINUING AND HIGHLY VISIBLE PREPARATIONS FOR IT ARE KEEPPING HOPES ALIVE THAT WAY WILL BE FOUND TO END BLOODSHED.

10. THERE IS LITTLE COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY IN BEIRUT, EXCEPT FOR GROCERY STORES. BEGINNING THE END OF THIS WEEK, TAPLINE INTENDS TO PUMP ANOTHER 250,000 BARRELS OF CRUDE TO MEDRECO REFINERY IN SIDON, PROVIDING IT WITH SUFFICIENT CRUDE UNTIL AT LEAST END OF THE MONTH.

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